



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

March 23, 2005

Tortolan man pleads guilty in human smuggling case

ST. THOMAS, U.S. Virgin Islands—A 60-year-old Tortolan man who attempted to smuggle 19 illegal aliens into the country pleaded guilty here yesterday following a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigation.

Carlwill Potter's vessel was discovered by officers of the U.S. Virgin Islands Police Department (USVIPD) on Oct. 17, 2004 stranded three miles off the coast of St. Thomas. ICE special agents responded to the scene, conducted an investigation and subsequently charged Potter with human smuggling.

Potter's sentencing hearing is scheduled for July 26, 2006. He faces a minimum of 10 years in prison.

All of those attempting to illegally enter the country were charged with immigration violations. They represent the following countries: Dominican Republic, Haiti, St. Maarten, Jamaica and Peoples Republic of China.

"Smugglers who think that the U.S Virgin Islands is an easy gateway for smuggling aliens into the United States are sorely mistaken," said Lydia St. John-Mellado, acting special agent-in-charge of ICE in Puerto Rico. "ICE will investigate and work closely with our partners at the Department of Justice (DOJ) to prosecute these criminals."

Disrupting and dismantling human smuggling and trafficking rings has been a top priority for ICE since the agency was established in March 2003, given the potential threat that these organizations pose both to national security and public safety. With ICE's broad authorities for enforcing immigration and customs laws and its expertise in financial investigations, the agency is able to pursue human smuggling organizations more aggressively than ever before. As a result, ICE agents arrested more than 1,630 human smugglers nationwide in fiscal year 2004.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.